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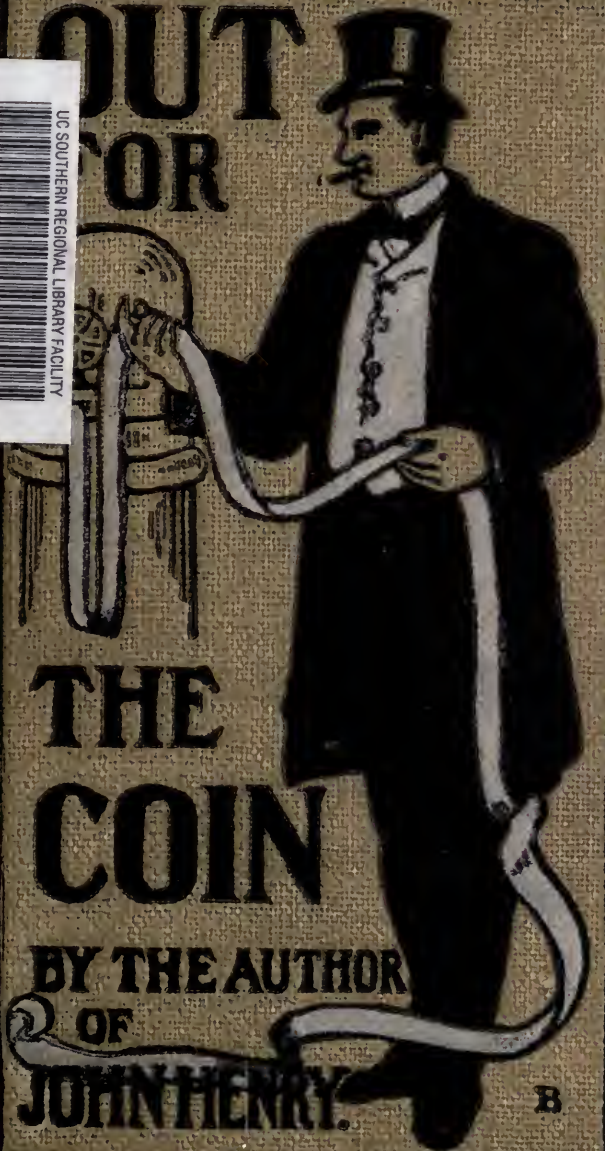
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BY THE AUTHOR

OF
JOHN HENRY.



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OUT FOR THE COIN



"Seven Orphan Skates—bred
in Old Kentucky."—Page 25.

OUT FOR THE COIN

By HUGH McHUGH, pseud.

Hobart, George V.

AUTHOR OF

"JOHN HENRY," "DOWN THE LINE WITH JOHN
HENRY," "IT'S UP TO YOU," "BACK TO
THE WOODS," ETC.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GORDON H. GRANT

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OUT FOR THE COIN

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***To the thousands and thousands of the
Faithful who have Followed me From my
First book to the Fourth, be patient with
the Fifth and let us be Friends to the
Finish.***

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OUT FOR THE COIN.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN HENRY GETS IN WALL STREET.

S EVEN thousand ahead in seven days!—John, if you keep that up you'll set Morgan back among the pikers!" Bunch Jefferson joshed me, as we ducked out of a broker's office and headed up Wall Street for Broadway.

"It does look like a skeeze!" I answered, swelling up fore and aft, as I gave Bunch the easy-money gaze.

"I've got money now I can't spend. Every morning I crawl into the bank

with a bundle of bills that a horse couldn't kick apart in a week!"

"Say! Bunch, the receiving teller up at the Money Barn has gout in his fingers from counting the kick-full of yellow backs I unload on him every day. If my luck holds out and I keep on Pierping I'll have to build my own bank."

Bunch gave me the merry ring-off and told me that my head-piece was growing out over the sidewalk too far.

"The trouble with you, John," explained Bunch, as we dropped into the club where I get my mail down town, "is that a bundle of quick money gives you palpitation of the egotism, and you begin to see medals on your chest!"

Bunch loves to throw ice-water at his friends.

"Who put you woozy to this Wall Street fight?" inquired Bunch.

"Uncle Peter did," I answered. "Say! will you go in bathing if I call the waiter? What'll it be, surf or still water?"

"A lemonade for mine," Bunch said.

"All right, if you're afraid of the surf so am I—bring me the same! Yes; you know Uncle Peter used to be a money-coaxer here in the Street.

"He was one of those old guys with the mucilage on the hands—couldn't drag the money away from him without tearing it.

"Finally he got so rich that he used to trip and fall over the day's winnings when he tried to lock up shop in the evening. He then decided to build a fort around his rake-off, so he

grabbed his lid, shook a day-day to the Street, and dipped for the woods."

"No doubt your family history is highly diverting when heard for the first time," Bunch put in, "but it turns sour on the twenty-second repeat. Let's have sixteen bars rest on this Uncle Peter gag. I know he's the man who invented money and then sat down on his invention, but why tease ourselves by walking around the mint when the gates are all locked?"

"Bunch, you give me a pain in the waist!" I got back; "ever since you fell in love with Alice Gray you've done nothing but stand around and throw the hammer at Uncle Peter. The fact that Alice's Uncle William Gray and Peter Grant are ancient enemies doesn't give you the right to jab the harpoon into my uncle. What

are you trying to do, cook up one of those Kentucky feuds just to make good with the girl?"

Bunch laughed uneasily, and said, "Nix on the feud thing, but you must remember, John, that Uncle William Gray used to do a few stunts in Wall Street himself before he crawled away into high grass to cool off. Peter Grant wasn't the only cuckoo on the curb in those days!"

"Why, Uncle Peter put it all over old Bill Gray whenever they bumped," I yelled. "Every time they clinched Uncle Peter used to push Bill Gray under the safe and hit him with the combination.

"Old Bill Gray is only an imitation financier. He's nothing but a piker. Whenever he lost two dollars he made the office boy jab the hypodermic needle into his shoulder in order to

put strength enough in his arm to pay up.

"I'm wise to that old jojo. Every time he won eight dollars he used to run out in the street and faint there so as not to wear out his office floor. Don't unveil any Bill Gray statues near me, Bunch, or I'll get critical."

Bunch was hot about the collar just about then, so I called for another dish of ice and we bit into it.

Presently Bunch caught a cool and inquired, "What stock are you trailing?"

"D. Q. & N.," I said, "and it's the goods. I climbed in at 95 and to-day it's 104. It's a moral that it goes to 10 before it hits the ceiling. Why don't you cut off a slice?"

"Not me," Bunch said; "I've been tipped to a sag."

"Sag nothing," I chirped; "every-

thing is on the airship. It's a case of balloon on the Bourse, my boy, so come on up the ladder. D. Q. & N. goes up to 10 without a single side-step.

"Why, Bunch, I've picked out the spot where I'll build a tunnel from here to Hartford, Conn., as soon as D. Q. & N. hits the rafters. That's the latest pizaro, my friend. All we millionaires begin to build tunnels when our wealth gets cumbersome. Come on, Beau, get in on D. Q. & N., and join the tunnel push, won't you?"

"Take my paragraphs for the real news and bow yourself out of D. Q. & N. There are doings," Bunch advised.

"Say, you're handing me the same line of gas gab that Uncle Peter threw at me this morning before I left home. 'Get out when it hits 102, John!' he

told me. Suppose I had listened to his patter song, wouldn't I be good friends with the lobsters? I've got it right that D. Q. & N. is on the hal-yards for a hoist, and I'm going up in the elevator, too."

"You for the witch hazel on the neck!" Bunch chimed in.

"Oh, very well, Beau, I'll get off if you're going to get sulky about it," I said with appropriate sarcasm, as I dived for the telephone.

Get out of D. Q. & N. now, when I stood to win a wad a street roller couldn't flatten out! Nix on the back up.

I called Clara J. on the 'phone and asked her to meet me in town for dinner.

When I got back to Bunch he was using the grin that won't rub off. It always tickles an advice-pusher if he

thinks somebody has listened to his tip.

I let him dream.

"Still living at Jiggersville?" Bunch inquired.

"Jiggersville nothing!" I snapped; "why, we held a mass meeting of the citizens and changed the name of the place. Uncle Peter and I went down to the depot and woke up the rest of the inhabitants, and he came out of the ticket office and helped us change the name to Ruraldene. Like it? And we call our home Dove's Nest Villa—wouldn't that keep you off the grass?"

"Dove's Nest Villa, Ruraldene!" Bunch repeated, gingerly.

"Pastoral idea, isn't it?" I urged.

"Very," Bunch agreed; "sounds like a cow promenading a muddy road

after a rainstorm. It's full of local color."

"Jealous!" I retorted. "You! in a minute! Why, you'd be over the hills to a shack in the woodlands in jig time if you only had nerve enough to lure that girl of yours away to a minister and have him rivet the handcuffs on!"

"Nix on the hayseed habitation—not me!" grinned Bunch. "Not any bungalows in the brush for mine. Why, I wouldn't wear out my feet running after the 7:02 train in the morning and the 5:19 in the evening for any castle in a cornfield—not if it had a bevy of real cooks chained to the kitchen wall!"

"Say! we had a cook that stayed with us a whole week!" I boasted.

"Yes, I know," snickered Bunch; "she stayed the last six days because

she fell off the veranda and sprained her ankle. Are you paddling after the ponies these moments?"

"Not so that you could notice it," I answered. "Why, Bunch, I took a solemn six months ago not to look another race track in the eye as long as I live.

"I've handed the good-night signal to the bookies and for me so far as the turtles are concerned the six o'clock whistle blows perpetually.

"Say, Bunch, this Wall Street picnic has the races squeezed to a shriek. No more bum gallops for mine!"

"Wife objected, didn't she?" Bunch quizzed.

"Well, Clara J. didn't exactly object, but after I lost everything I had in the world except my appetite, she made me promise to pass the ponies up.

"She suggested that every time I felt an uncontrollable desire to lose my money I'd better put the coin in a bag and she'd walk down to the river with me and help me drown it like they do kittens.

"For a week or two kind friends had to blindfold me and lead me past the bulletin boards, but since I got the dope out of my system I feel fine."

"Never no more?" Bunch queried.

"Not on your palisades!" I answered. "I promised Peaches never again, and this time it goes if I have to wear blinders. Why, I wouldn't trot to the track again even if I could drag the long green away in a dray."

"That sounds good, John, but I hope you're not treating yourself to a hot-air serenade," said Bunch, thoughtfully.

"Nix on the steam spiel," I an-

swered. "I wouldn't ring in a cold deck on the little woman at home for any horse that ever hugged a hames—not me!

"Why, for four years the Bookies broke it off in me till I looked like a porcupine in distress. I had baseball fingers and knots on my thumbs from trying to get my money out fast. Honest, Bunch, my face used to get sore just from trying to look pleasant after a long day's lose."

At this point one of the hall boys butted in.

"Letter here for you, Mr. Henry—been here three or four days," he said, as he placed the document in my hand and retired.

"Somewhat the worse for wear, isn't it?" I observed to Bunch, after a hasty look-over.

It had evidently been chasing me

around town, for the envelope gave token of having been re-addressed several times.

I opened it and read it through casually. Then I became the author of a yell that awoke the neighborhood.

"What is it?" gasped Bunch in astonishment.

"Read the damn thing!" I spluttered, fanning myself with the lemonade glass while heat waves played tag all over my system.

Bunch took the letter and read it aloud:—

LEXINGTON, KY., *June 19th.*

JOHN HENRY, Esquire.

Respected Sir.—Your father's brother, Owen Henry, having departed this world by dying, has left to you in my care seven horses, mostly two-year-olds, and all of them promising youngsters. As I am coming East with some of my own horses, I will bring yours along and will be pleased to meet you in Jersey City about June 29th in the afternoon to deliver the goods.

Hoping this finds you well, as it leaves me at present.

Your obed't serv't,

MURF HIGGINBOTTOM.

"Wouldn't that keep you waiting?"

Bunch grinned.

"Seven orphan skates!" I groaned in bitterness.

"They were bred in old Kentucky!" Bunch carolled gayly.

"My father's brother, Owen!" I gasped.

"Seven come eleven!" whispered Bunch.

"Uncle Owen is dead," I murmured, "and I never knew he was alive!"

"Mostly two-year-olds!" said Bunch in a stage whisper.

"All of them promising youngsters," I muttered.

"But you promised the little woman at home never no more to——"

“Oh! shut up!” I snapped, “and tell me what am I to do?”

“Do!” echoed Bunch. “Do nothing. Pass it up, unless you want to start a stable and go broke!”

“Wait!” I yelled; “see here—he arrives June 29th—that’s to-day—now!—where’s my hat?”

“And what then?” asked Bunch.

“Me for the ferry!” I said, hoarsely.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN HENRY GETS SOME HORSES.

I FOUND Murf.

Over in the yards of the Pennsy, I found him and his select assortment of equine roustabouts.

Murf was all to the good. He had a Kentucky dialect that sounded like a pink tea on a moonshiner's lawn, and he was made up to look like something that could be but didn't seem possible.

Murf was glad to see me. "Yo' all cern'ly do favah yo' Uncle Owen, suh: Mighty sudden taking off, but a ge'man, suh, right up to the finish of the funeral sa'monies—yes, suh! Providence had saw fit to drag yo' Uncle

away from the pleasures of the thirst, but like a brave Kaintucky ge'man he furnished drinkables for all them that saw him planted—thoughtful ge'man, yo' Uncle Owen, suh! In all the history of our country, suh, they wa'nt nevah a funeral wh'a B'u'bon was so free and tasted so good. Know much about hosses, suh?"

Then and there I tried to confess to Murf that I didn't know the difference between a fetlock and a quart of oats.

"I don't quite understand why my late lamented Uncle Owen should have turned this foundling asylum of fillies over to me, Murf. I never did Unc any harm in life and I don't see why he should come back after the croak and haunt me in the form of seven spinled-legged sand-pounders!"

"Family pride, suh!" Murf answered, incisively. "Yo' late Uncle

Owen done much for the spo't of Kings, suh! He spent his money freely, suh, for the glory of the steeplechase and the one mile dash ovah the old co'se, suh!"

"Generous Unc," I answered, somewhat bitterly.

"And when yo' uncle was entered, suh, in his last race with the pale hoss whose rider is Death, suh, he called me ovah and says, 'Murf, yo' all take three of them thu'breeds for yo'self and them othah seven goes to my brother's boy in New Yo'k according to my last will and testament—bettah pull open a fresh bottle of that B'u'-bon, Murf!' he said, suh, just afo' he turned his face to the wall."

Murf paused while memory stepped up to the bar and refreshed itself.

"What made Uncle Owen think that I would shriek with joy over the

arrival of seven sunburned colts into the bosom of my family?" I finally asked in despair.

"Just a few weeks previous to yo' uncle's *demise*, suh, a Kaintucky hossman came home from the East, suh, and info'med yo' uncle that yo' all was big Casino on the Eastern tracks, suh!"

"A Kentucky horseman told Uncle Owen that?" I repeated. "Naughty horseman. What's his name?"

"Hank Peters, suh, from ovah Bowling Green way. Him and Kee Barclay, the old colt tamer from Princeton, Kaintucky, spent sev'al weeks in the East this spring. Hank told yo' Uncle Owen, suh, that he chummed up with yo' all at Gravesend."

"Hank chummed up with me at Gravesend!" I echoed, vainly trying



"Yo' all was Big Casino on the
Eastern Tracks."—Page 30.

to get wise. "I wonder if that was the day I fell off the water wagon!"

"Hank was all swelled up ovah meeting yo', suh. Yo' all told Hank that when it came to knowing the race track game yo' had Pittsburg Phil put to bed without saying his prayers!"

"I told Hank that, did I?"

"Yo' all did, suh; and yo' told him that when it came to a show down on hoss knowledge yo' had William C. Whitney up in a sycamo' tree a'holler-in' for help, suh!"

I could feel my ears getting red.

"That was the day yo' all won \$42,000 on the fo'th race, suh!"

"The day I won \$42,000—who dared to wake me?"

"Hank says yo' all told him that it was the smallest win you had made at the meet, suh!"

"There's no doubt about it, Murf,"

I said, thoughtfully. "That *was* the day I fell off the water wagon, and I must have landed on Hank good and hard. I remember the afternoon, but I can't place Hank. I wonder what round of drinks he blew in with! That was the evening I win \$8 and the shock drove me up against the bar. It was my first take-down in six weeks and it made me so nervous I was afraid to keep the cash. Before dark I had traded my roll for a bun, and then I began to talk pipe-talk, and dream out loud. You know, Murf, whenever I hit the hose the first thing I do is to turn on the electric fan and get the hot air busy. Your friend, Hank, probably got caught in the wind storm."

Murf listened in silence till I had finished; then he said, slowly:

"Yo' Uncle Owen left this world,

suh, believing yo' to be a fuss class hossman. It's up to yo' all not to make yo' Uncle Owen out no liah, suh!"

Murf the implacable; Murf the unbeliever; Murf with a power of attorney from Fate. What would Clara J. say when she discovered that I had jumped into the stormy sea of horse speculation and was far from the life-raft? Visions of a happy home rent asunder tortured my sight and I could hear busy old Uncle Peter driving me forth with wild anathemas.

Presently Murf broke in upon my meditations: "Hadn't yo' all bettah look the hosses ovah, suh?"

I took a peep at the ponies, and seeing but seven of 'em I asked Murf where his three were.

"It became necessa'y for me to part with my three, suh, in order to ca'y

out yo' Uncle Owen's request and deliver the goods to yo' all," he answered, quietly.

"Murf," I said, with a bit of a lump in my throat, "you're aces up with me from this moment. This cloudburst of horses came on so suddenly that I forgot my manners—shake!"

We shook hands and I asked: "Didn't Uncle Owen leave any money when he took the long canter?"

"After the estate was settled up, suh, they wa'nt nothing left but them thar hosses and yo' Uncle Owen's last will and testament," Murf replied. "I was yo' Uncle Owen's trainer for eighteen years, suh, and when I heard the facts in the case I says, 'Murf, yo' all are going East to train them thar colts for yo' friend Owen's nephew seeing as how Hank Peters says the young man is big Casino on

the Eastern tracks.' I had to sell my colts to do it, but I got here and I wait yo' orders, suh!"

I couldn't possibly do a soft shell solo and leave that kind of a man flat without the price of a dish of beans in his rowdydows, so I quickly made up my mind to see Murf through if I had to put him and the ponies in the spare room at Ruraldene.

"Yo' Uncle Owen had a pow'ful sum of money once but he was enticed into speculating in Wall Street and lose," Murf continued; "it is one of my pa'ticular desiahs to meet one of them brokers and communicate my best respects, suh!" he added, bitterly.

I sized up the wiry frame of Murf and shuddered as I thought of the result it would have on that human air

cushion known as Uncle Peter, but I said nothing.

Finally I came to an amicable understanding with Murf Higginbottom, my friend from Kentucky, and we decided to send the colts to a training farm not far from Ruraldene.

I figured it out that by getting rid of my D. Q. & N. stock at the present price I'd be about \$8,000 to the good, and with this amount I saw my way clear to making a shine start with my Santa Claus stable.

"If yo' all don't happen to be big Casino on the Eastern tracks, suh, I would advise you not to mention nothing about it, because I don't care to have yo' Uncle Owen's opinions disturbed, suh!" Murf quietly admonished as we parted.

Plainly I was being whipsawed by circumstances, but I hugged the con-

soling thought that some day one of those Kentucky rabbits might get scared and cut around the track in a manner calculated to give the oddslayers a nervous chill.

I didn't want to keep Clara J. waiting up town, so I hustled over the Cortlandt Street ferry to keep our dinner engagement.

The first foot I stepped on in the Elevated belonged to Bunch Jefferson.

"You're a lucky McManus, all right!" he informed me as I shared his strap.

"You haven't seen Murf and the seven goats," I answered, sadly.

"No, but I saw my prophecy pulled off," he answered. "Mean to tell me you have'nt heard about the slippery-day stairs in the Street?"

My heart began to beat its way out and I could feel the cold chills moving

into furnished rooms up and down my spine.

"I've been too busy to buy a paper; anything happen?" I gasped.

"The bottom dropped out of the market ten minutes after you left. D. Q. & N. fell in the well and closed at 93. You certainly were a wise William to roll off the toboggan," he said, calmly.

I tried to bite the strap, but the guard had his eye on me, so I compromised by emitting a short, sharp groan.

"What's the matter?" Bunch inquired.

"Nothing" I answered feebly; "I was thinking about my orphan skates far from their old Kentucky home."

CHAPTER III.

JOHN HENRY AND THE SOUSE THING.

I BROUGHT Tacks with me because I had to do some shopping, and he's so much company," Clara J. explained, when I joined them at the restaurant.

"Tacks is always pleasant company," I said, politely, but I determined to keep a watchful eye on my youthful brother-in-law, nevertheless.

That kid was born with an abnormal bump of mischief and by painstaking endeavor he has won the world's championship as an organizer of impromptu riots.

"Oh, John!" said Clara J. when I began to make faces at the menu

card, "I didn't notice until now how pale you look. Have you had a busy day?"

"Busy!" I repeated; "well, rather. I've been giving imitations of a bull fight. Everybody I met was the bull and I was the fight. Nominate your eats! What'll it be, Tacks?"

"Sponge cake," said Tacks, promptly.

"What else?" asked Clara J.

"More sponge cake," the youth replied, and just then the smiling and sympathetic waiter stooped down to pick up a fork Tack had dropped.

In his anxiety not to miss anything, Tacks rubbered acrobatically with the result that he upset a glass of ice water down the waiter's neck, and three seconds later the tray-trotter had issued an Extra and was

saying things in French that would sound scandalous if translated.

It cost me a dollar to bring the dish-dragger back to earth, and Tacks said I could break his bank open when we got home and take all the money if I'd let him do it again.

"Uncle Peter is delighted beyond measure with your business ability," Clara J. informed me after the treaty of peace had been signed with the waiter.

"He has a right to be!" I muttered, painfully, as I thought of my swift ride down the mountain side on D. Q. & N.

"He says that by following his directions carefully you are seven thousand richer to-day. Are you, John?"

"Sure, Peaches!" I answered, truthfully, "I'm *seven* to the good."

I neglected to add the word skates, but, then, what's a little thing like that amount to among friends?

"Seven in one day," she said, enthusiastically.

"Seven in one day—one of them with four white feet," I said, like a man in a dream.

"What do you mean?" Clara J. asked; "is that a Wall Street expression?"

"No," I answered hastily; "I was only talking to myself and I held the 'phone too close to my mouth. Let's start this banquet with a hot wave—waiter, clam cocktails for three!"

"Uncle Peter, Aunt Martha and I had a long talk to-day about your prospects in Wall Street," Clara J. rattled on. "Oh, John, you don't know how happy it makes me feel to

think that you'll never, never go near those awful race tracks again."

My thoughts took the ferry for Jersey City, and I could hear Murf Higginbottom saying, "Yo' Uncle Owen considered yo' all as big Casino on the Eastern tracks, suh!"

"You'll make a lot of money with the seven you got to-day, won't you, dear?" Peaches asked, encouragingly.

"Possibly," I replied, nervously; "still, you never can tell. They may get into the habit of running backwards—er, I mean, the market is very uncertain!—Tacks, take your thumb out of that butter!"

"I was so sorry I couldn't get you on the 'phone early this afternoon," Clara J. informed me. "I called up your broker's office down town, but they couldn't find you."

"Sorry I had to give you the busy ear, Peaches, but the fact is I paddled away to the office of Higginbottom & Co., who wanted to put me wise to some, er—that is, some new stock!"

"Railroad stock?" she inquired.

"Well, not exactly Twentieth Century Limiteds or Royal Blue Flyers," I answered, "but I think some of it could win from a slow freight if properly coaxed."

"Watered stock, I suppose!" laughed Clara J.

"Yes, it was watered all right, but not fed," I replied. "There wasn't much doing in oats until I led the way to the barn."

I had Peaches in the air by this time, but she thought I was talking the broker dialect, so she stayed on the roof and watched the scenery go by.

Just then I got a flash of Dike Law-

rence bearing down in our direction under a full head of gasolene.

Dike was leading a three-days' jag by the hand and talking to it like a child.

A good old fellow, Dike, but for years he permitted a distillery to use his thirst as a testing station and it had put the dear boy away to the conviv.

Dike was a good lawyer when he worked at it, rich, unmarried, and the busiest booze buyer in the Borough.

"H'ar'ye, Mrs. John? Howdy, John? How do do, little man! Scuze me for int'rupting a family party, but I demand 'pology!" he spluttered.

"What's wrong, Dike?" I inquired.

"Demand 'pology," Dike continued.

"Old friend life time threw me down—lesh have drink! Your little son

growing shplendid boy, Mrs. John!"

"This is Tacks, my little brother, not my son, Mr. Lawrence!" Clara J. explained; "we haven't any children," she added nervously.

"Haven't got a baby—my mistake! Ought to have one by this time—damshame, John! I demand 'pology! Lesh have drink!"

As I said before, Dike is the champion bun builder of my acquaintance, consequently his conversational outbursts are never considered seriously.

"Shorry make such a shene, Mrs. John!" old Doctor Benzine rattled on, "but. musht have 'pology from life-long friend. Threw me down hard—waiter, bring bo'l wine, quart wine, two quarts wine, whole damcase wine—beg pardon, Mrs. John! shouldn't shwear presence lady and her little son—little brother, scuze

me!—the wish is father to the son, I mean father to the boy—don't know what t'ell I mean!—lesh have drink—musht have 'pology!”

“What's gone wrong, Dike? Who owes you an apology?” I asked in an endeavor to calm him.

“You do,” he answered, trying to look me in the eye; “wait till I get back I'll shplain why demand 'pology,” and then his lamps started to follow the room as it went round and round.

Presently his gaze rested on Clara J., and he continued, “Mrs. John, your husband's gay Lothario—bet two dollars thash lasht time to-day I'll be able to shay that word. Never could shay word like that after sheven o'clock. Mrs. John, you mush join me demand 'pology from thish man. Time's come when friendship sheashes

and we musht shtand togezzer, sho'ler to sho'ler, Mrs. John, and so mush your little son—I mean little brother—for love of Heaven please have little son with you next time so I can shay what I want to! Lesh have drink!”

“What did my husband do to offend you, Mr. Lawrence!” Clara J. asked, encouragingly.

“Threw me down—hard, cold, flat! Life-long friend threw me down. I shink I’ll bust out crying!” Dike answered, on the verge of tears.

“Where did I throw you down, Dike?” I asked, smilingly.

“Jershee Shizzy!” he answered, painfully.

“Where did you say?” I snapped, perceiving quickly that Dike and his souse promised to lead me into the ice house with Clara J.

"Jershee Shizzy!" Dike repeated, doggedly.

"Does your friend mean Jersey City?" Clara J. asked, throwing out a chill that cooled the room.

"Jershee Shizzy, ash what I shed," Dike put in. "If I don't get 'pology I'll bust out crying!"

"When did you see me in Jersey City? How dare you make such an accusation against me?" I demanded.

"John," said Dike, trying earnestly to look at me gravely, "I shaw you in Jershee Shizzy zish aft'noon. Pen-shionvania station, zish aft'noon. Spoke to you politely—you threw me down. Followed you to demand 'pology—you gave me shake." Saying this he grabbed a wine glass from the table and held it close to his heart in order to illustrate the intensity of his feeling.

The next instant a thick, reddish liquid began to flow sluggishly over the bosom of his immaculate white shirt and was lost in the region of his equator, seeing which Dike gave vent to a yell that brought the waiters on the hot foot.

"I'm stabbed! stabbed!" groaned the startled jag-carpenter, clutching wildly at his shirt front.

"It's my clam cocktail," whispered Tacks to me; "I poured it in his wine glass 'cause they was too much to-bascum sauce in it for me!"

"Brave boy!" I answered. "It was a kindly deed. Come on, Clara J., the woods for ours!"

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN HENRY AND THE TWO DIPPY BOYS.

TACKS laughed half the way home, but Clara J. kept handing me the verbal ice pitcher.

"What's the matter, Peaches? surely you're not angry because the old original jag builder butted in! Dike doesn't mean any harm, believe me; and, besides, I couldn't help it—I didn't see him first," I explained.

"Oh! Mr. Lawrence didn't worry me," she answered; "I felt sorry for him, that's all."

"Then why don't you haul in the cold wave flag?" I insisted.

"What did he mean about Jersey City?" she queried.

“Peaches, I’m astonished!” I answered. “Don’t you know that Dike has been carrying that lightship around with him all day? Don’t you know that a man hasn’t time to think straight when he is trying to pilot a bun like that through the city’s streets? Don’t pay any attention to Dike; every time he gets good and kippered with the souse thing he always goes around among his friends hoping somebody will apologize to him for something so that he’ll have another excuse to buy a tub of suds.”

“Yes, but you went to Jersey City alone, and I’ve been begging you for six months to go over there with me and call on Aunt Debbie Williams,” Clara J. complained.

“Is that all that’s worrying you?” I answered. “You see, I had to go over there on business—stock busi-

ness—and that's no idle dream! The first time I get hold of an evening that I really hate I'll take it over to Aunt Deb's and kill it. We'll do a society call that will make her and the parrot sit up and notice us. Come on, now, Peaches, let's tear up the divorce papers and be good friends again!"

Clara J. smiled and then I knew the storm was over.

Bright and early next morning Uncle Peter was down on our porch throwing the hooks into me about my Wall Street deal.

"How much are you ahead, John?" he asked, delightedly.

Of course I couldn't afford to let him know that I had sawdust in the coco so I yawned and said, "Oh! about \$8,000!" in a bored sort of way.

"Fine," chuckled the old gentleman; "now you take my advice and

stay out of the market for a week or two."

"Sure as you live," I answered, earnestly. "Make it three weeks—I'll give the Street a chance to recover from the jolt I gave it. It doesn't seem right to go down and yank the yellowbacks away from those busy boys in the Bond district, so I'll let up on them for a while, eh, Uncle Peter?"

The old man took my josh as a bit of on-the-level reading matter and said, "Leave it to me. I'll tell you when to get in again and when to get out. After that stormy drop in Westerns yesterday the market is bound to be unsteady. Walk slow, John and watch me."

I promised to be very careful and went in the house to figure out just how I stood in the matter of ready

cash. After a hard dig I found that over and above home comforts I could roll up just eleven hundred dollars, enough to keep Murf and the seven orphan skates out of the poorhouse for a few days, at any rate.

After breakfast I sat down in my dope den to map out a plan of campaign and presently Clara J. came in and said, "John, how much more money will you have to make in Wall Street before you can buy that automobile you promised me?"

"Did I threaten to get one of those kerosene carts for you?" I answered. "I'm getting so absent minded. Well, just as soon as the new styles are ready I'll get a devil wagon for you, Peaches, that will burn up the barn every time it goes out."

"When do you think the new styles will be ready?" she asked.

“In about a year,” I guessed. “You see Tom Edison is working on a new thingamajig that won’t buckle the eccentric. Oh! it’ll be a great day for automobiles when that new thingamajig is invented. I promised Tom faithfully I wouldn’t buy a benzine buggy until he invents the dingus—that’s the name of it! The dingus. You see, Peaches, a dingus is something like a biftoid, only its deeper and more parallel near the circumference. You wouldn’t care to have an auto without a dingus, now would you? Especially when I’ve promised Tom to wait till he invents one?”

Clara J. didn’t know exactly whether I was kidding her or not, so she laughed and dipped her oars.

An hour later she was back again just when I had my pipe burning fine

and my horses had won me \$89,000. I hated to wake up.

"John," she said, "I've been talking for some little time with a peculiar-looking stranger who came to see you."

"Yes," I said; "what's the answer?"

"From what he says I am led to believe that you are deceiving me," she came back at me, coldly and cuttingly.

"Deceiving you!" I repeated.

"About horse racing," she added, with falling barometer and increasing cloudiness, winds shifting to north-east, probably snow.

I began to wonder if I had talked in my sleep. If so, here was my chance to confess all and do the retreat from the Moscow act; but I hadn't the nerve, and quickly the golden moment was gone.

"The man's name is Murf Higginbottom!" she said, quietly, looking me straight in the eye.

"Murf Higginbottom!" I echoed slowly, while I got a good grip and pulled myself together.

"Yes, Murf Higginbottom!" she said, questioningly.

"Dear old Murf," I murmured; "so he *did* get out to see us after all. Bless his kind heart, how does he look?"

"I presume he looks as he usually does; you ought to know," she answered, haughtily.

"All the way from Kentucky to see me," I went on as though thinking aloud. "He was my Uncle Owen's best friend—Uncle Owen Henry, of Lexington, Kentucky."

Clara J. watched me narrowly.

"Poor Uncle Owen is dead!" I said, with a sob.

"Uncle Owen is dead!" Clara J. said in astonishment.

"Yes, dear, but don't cry; I'll bear the blow alone," I cut in.

"I had no thought of crying, I assure you," she answered. "Why, I never even heard of this Uncle Owen before."

"Neither did I!—that is, I mean I never heard of him dying until he was dead!—a very sad case. The news only reached me yesterday, but I kept it from you and I bore up and was cheerful just for your sake, Peaches."

She didn't know just how to size me up.

"And now Murf is here," I started again. "Murf was my Uncle Owen's care for years. I wonder if Murf is still afflicted. Did Murf say that he was on here with a string of horses?"

"He did," she said, stonily.

“Poor old Murf! A string of seven horses for me?”

“A string of seven horses for you, yes!”

“Too bad; I was so in hopes Murf was better. Did he say that Uncle Owen considered me big Casino on the Eastern tracks?”

“His very words,” Clara J. said.

“Isn’t it pitiful to think Murf is no better,” I went on; “but he’s perfectly harmless.”

“Harmless!” she repeated.

“Perfectly so,” I answered. “He’s been that way for years. When quite a young man a thoroughbred horse belonging to my Uncle Owen kicked Murf on the head and ever since that day the poor fellow is always arriving in the East with a string of seven horses for the big Casino on the Eastern tracks. He’s what we call ‘colt-

crazy' in medical circles. As soon as I meet him he'll tell me the horses are well, see if he doesn't."

The only thing that kept me from hating myself was the thought that some of those horses might win me enough to keep Clara J. in luxury all the rest of her life.

"We must humor him, that's all," I continued; "he won't stay long—poor old Murf!"

Clara J. began to walk slowly up to the straight goods counter and I felt that a catastrophe had been averted.

"Let's go and see Murf," I suggested, "but let me handle him. So long as I don't deny what he says about horses you'll find him the quiet boy with the gentle gaze; and if he does insist that I'm a horse owner, give him the belief smile and pass it up."

On the veranda Murf and Uncle Peter were conversing earnestly, but directly we appeared Murf arose and said, "Yo' colts are doing fuss class, suh; but I reckon yo' all best come down and look them ovah, suh! We are qua'ted only about three miles away from here, suh!"

"Didn't I call the turn?" I whispered to Clara J. "Put Uncle Peter wise to Murf's condition and tell him not to make any breaks."

Uncle Peter scowled fiercely at me and joined Clara J., while I shook Murf's hand and lied how glad I was to see him.

"This here old man is yo' uncle, suh?" Murf inquired.

"My wife's uncle," I replied.

"That's some bettah, suh; being no blood relation, it won't hu't yo' pride so much when I tell yo' all that

he has lightning bugs in his hayloft," Murf said, earnestly.

"What has the old gentleman done to you, Murf?" I inquired.

"Done, suh!" sniffed Murf, contemptuously; "when I info'med him, suh, that I had brought seven hosses on from Kaintucky for yo' all he began to froth at the mouth, suh! And when I told him that yo' Uncle Owen went ovah the final and full co'se believing that yo' all was big Casino on the Eastern tracks, suh, that old truck hoss laughed in my face, suh. I permit some few people to use their laugh on me, pussonally, but I allow no one, suh, to laugh at yo' Uncle Owen's beliefs, now that it is too everlasting late to change them, suh!"

"Good old Murf, you mustn't mind Uncle Peter; he's sun-touched," I

said, tapping my forehead significantly.

“Oh!” said Murf; “locoed?”

“Plum, on the horse question,” I answered; “but otherwise as harmless as a kitten. He was kicked on the forehead some years ago by a roadster, and now even the mention of a horse puts him up in the air. Talk automobiles to him, Murf, and be on the safe side.”

“I reckon yo’ all best excuse me from any automobile talk,” said Murf, earnestly. “I nevah hope to see the day, suh, when one of them foolish wagons can rise high enough in my esteem to be talked about. I’m a hossman, and from Kaintucky, suh!”

At that moment, Clara J., Aunt Martha, Uncle Peter and Tacks appeared, and it was evident from their actions that a family council with re-

gard to Murf's supposed mental condition had just adjourned pending further investigation.

The two ladies remained at a safe distance and whispered together sympathetically from time to time, while Tacks armed himself with a rock and prepared for the worst.

But the hit of the show was Uncle Peter. He danced around Murf with a broad grin on his face and bowed extravagantly.

Murf sidled up to me. "Did yo' all say he's harmless?" he whispered, hoarsely.

"Perfectly so!" I answered; "humor him, though."

Uncle Peter called me aside. "Sure he's harmless?" he asked, eagerly.

"Perfectly so," I told him; "but humor him."

The two eyed each other and began

to grin foolishly. It was my cue to crack a rib, but I had to keep a straight face or lose the fight.

Presently Uncle Peter and Murf were strolling around the lawn together, the former laying himself out trying to be pleasant, while the latter kept watching his companion out of the corner of his eye.

I joined Clara J. and Aunt Martha to tell them that the visitor was as docile as a pet lamb, when suddenly an awful yell caused us to turn quickly, and we beheld Uncle Peter down on the lawn kicking furiously, while Murf sat on his chest and swatted him in the ribs.

In a moment I had pulled them apart and Murf exclaimed, "When the gentleman info'med me, suh, that he used to be a brokah in Wall Street, I fo'got for the moment that he is off



Murf sat on Uncle
Peter's Chest.—Page 66.

his dip, suh, and I plugged him one for yo' Uncle Owen's sake, suh, according to certain promises made to myself, suh! I'll be glad to see yo' all at ouah training quatahs to-morrow, suh!" and with this Murf politely doffed his hat to the alarmed ladies and strode off majestically down the road.-

"I beg pardon, Uncle Peter," I said, "but on the level, I forgot to tell you not to mention Wall Street to poor old Murf."

"Confound you and poor old Murf!" spluttered my surprised and bewildered relative, feeling the disturbed portions of his anatomy carefully for breakages. "The man is a lunatic. Harmless, indeed! It's my belief he ought to be in an asylum. Oh! my chest! my chest! I believe it's crushed in!"

Aunt Martha, in tears, ran hither and back in wild alarm. "Oh, Peter!" she cried; "you must put on a mustard plaster at once. Tacks, dear, run and get the mustard! Come in the house, Peter, and lie down. Oh, John, don't let that horrid man come here again!" and with this they all rushed in to spring the first aid to the injured gag on Uncle Peter.

I knew the old gentleman was more frightened than hurt, so I sat down on the wheelbarrow and treated myself to a hearty laugh.

Presently a wild war whoop issued from the interior of the house and Uncle Peter came running out, clawing at his manly bosom.

"Take it off! take it off!" he yelled; "it isn't mustard. Mustard only burns; this is biting clean through to my backbone! Take it off!" and with

this he threw the offending plaster out on the lawn and rushed off up stairs like one pursued by dogs.

I picked up the cause of the riot and looked it over just as Tacks drew nigh.

"You said the other day that Uncle Peter was bughouse, so when Aunt Martha wanted to make the mustard plaster I gave her the can of insect powder," he said, softly.

Isn't that boy the limit?

CHAPTER V.

JOHN HENRY AND THE ORPHAN SKATES.

DURING the following week I spent most of my time at the training quarters, and it wasn't long before the colts would nose around my pockets for the lumps of sugar I brought them.

The ponies soon tumbled to the fact that I was their meal ticket.

The things Murf knew about horse-flesh were scandalous. He had the racing business tied up in a knot in his handkerchief. Murf was one of those gamey little men that wouldn't take a dare from any nag that ever chewed a halter.

"That there little light bay filly



The Ponies soon tumbled that I
was their Meal Ticket.—Page 70.

with the fo' white feet for mine!" he observed sententiously, after the seven had been tried out thoroughly.

"Make mine the same, Murf," I answered; "she's all the goods, for sure."

"Whoa, little girl, steady! Yo' Uncle Owen would delight in that parcel of hossflesh, suh; have yo' all procu'd a name?" he asked.

"Call her Peaches," I answered quickly.

"Peaches!" Murf repeated.

"Sure as you live," I said; "we'll name her for the best girl that ever took a hurdle like me for a husband. Here's to Peaches! may she always have a place at the table when Fortune passes the cream!"

"I drink to yo' health, suh, and to Peaches!" Murf said, drawing a flask of his beloved Bourbon from his pock-

et and tipping it slightly; "this here youngster promises well, and no Kaintucky hoss evah yet broke a promise to me, suh!"

I gave all the money I possessed to Murf and told him to go ahead and see the thing through to a finish.

"You have full authority, Murf," I said, "and all the money I can raise without resorting to the use of dizzy-drops. If you win out, the glory will be yours."

"Yo' Uncle Owen considered yo' all big Casino on the Eastern tracks, suh; it is my duty to prove it, seeing that it ain't possible now to convince yo' Uncle Owen othahwise," he answered, slowly, and that settled it.

"I've been watching that black one yonder, Murf!" I said, pointing to little sad-eyes, the laziest looking skate in the string.

"Yes!" Murf answered, questioningly.

"I christen that one Shoemaker," I said.

"Shoemaker!" Murf echoed.

"Shoemaker," I continued, "because he'll be near the last all his life."

I didn't get a smile from Murf, so I got mad and went home.

The next morning while in the sitting room reading the papers I heard an argument started on the veranda, and looking out I beheld a weazened-face kid, not much larger than Tacks, holding a free-for-all with Uncle Peter.

"Does Mr. John Henry live here?" the visitor asked.

"He does," Uncle Peter replied, somewhat shortly; "what do *you* want with him?"

“I want him to gi’me de gaze!” the youth answered.

“To give you what?” Uncle Peter asked.

“De look-over, see! I’m for him if he warms to me on the peep!”

Uncle Peter was too mystified to speak.

To tell the honest, I was a bit to the daze myself. I’m considered a fairly wise guy on the figure of speech proposition, but that kid had me whimpering.

“Haven’t you made a mistake in the house?” the old gentleman finally inquired.

“Aw, choke up! choke up!” the stranger advised. “What do you t’ink I am—a wax works? My nut ain’t no empty shell, see! I’ve got a bunch of machinery behind my map for to steer me straight, and I ain’t

making no bum starts! Put me wise to de real Captain, will'e?"

"Have you something to sell?" Uncle Peter asked, suddenly struck with the idea that the stranger might be a peddler.

"Aw, say, Foxy Gran', ring de tinkler on yourself!" he answered, scornfully; "I ain't out doing no lecture for a living. Me t'roat is too busy to talk to you—pass my name up to de Main Squash, will'e?"

"What is your name?" Uncle Peter inquired.

"Spuds!" came the answer.

"Bless my soul!" Uncle Peter cried, in astonishment; "what a remarkable name; did you say Spuds?"

"I said Spuds, didn't I?" was the somewhat sharp rejoinder. "What do you want to call me, Percival?"

"I don't want to call you any-

thing, you impertinent young rascal," Uncle Peter said, hotly. "I'll call the dog presently."

"Don't you call no bow-wow on me or I'll bite him," the irrepressible Spuds retorted. "Say! what is dis, a chin-chin to a show down? Can't youse bow yourself out and chase de Boss Carpenter to me?"

Clara J., attracted by the loud tones, strolled over from the garden to see what was doing, and as for me, I was enjoying the affair too much to break it up by butting in.

"You wish to see somebody?" Clara J. asked, sweetly.

"Yes, lady," the youth answered, dragging a reluctant lid from his top-piece and shuffling nervously from one foot to another. "I was trying to cook up a chance to hand a line of

talk to de Main Stake, but old Santa Claus gave me de ice."

Clara J. looked at Uncle Peter in astonishment, and he scowled silently at the intruder.

"Come now, young man, state your business, or be off!" the old gentleman commanded.

"Aw, get used to yourself," the Spuds lad muttered. "I don't do no sneak till I pull off a meeting with the High Card, and dat goes, see!"

"Don't you know the name of the party you wish to see?" Clara J. inquired.

"Sure I do," Spuds responded; "it's Mr. John Henry."

"Oh!" she said; "he'll be here presently, I'm sure. Who sent you?"

"Mr. Murf," Spuds answered, whereupon I jumped quickly to my

feet. The affair had assumed a serious turn.

"Mr. Murf," she repeated, just as I stepped out.

"That's the infernal bandit who was here the other day," thundered Uncle Peter. "I'm black and blue all over from thinking about him. Drive this person off the premises; very likely he's crazy, too!"

"Easy," I whispered; "this is Murf's valet, no doubt."

"Valet!" snorted the old gentleman; "keeper, you mean. I must say, John, that I don't admire your selection of friends; when they aren't foolish, they are idiotic!" and with this he flew in the house.

"This is the gentleman you wished to see," I heard Clara J. saying to the caller as I turned.

"Mr. Murf sent me down to tell

youse, sir, dat de little goil is doin' fine!" was the first upper-cut I got from Spuds.

"Poor Murf!" I said to Clara J.; "isn't it wonderful how he can make people believe that there isn't any furniture broken in his garret. This young man, no doubt, is under the impression that—"

"Say!" Spuds broke in, "Mr. Murf is willing to let me wear the colors if you'll give him the ticket for me to ride, see!"

Then like a flash it dawned upon me. Spuds—the jockey! Murf had sent him up to me for a final look-over. Clara J. must not be permitted to suspect—what ho!

"Go back to Mr. Murf," I said, quickly to Spuds, "and tell him he's on!"

Spuds let one yell out of him and

started to do a series of joyous cart-wheels all over the lawn.

“What in the world does it all mean?” Clara J. asked.

“The ticket,” I explained; “didn’t you hear him say ticket? Poor old Murf is tired of the East and wants to go home. For dear Uncle Owen’s sake I must buy Murf’s railroad ticket; don’t you think so?”

“Good, generous John!” she answered, kissing me, and I felt as manly as a chair with one leg off.

“Hasn’t that annoying person gone yet?” demanded Uncle Peter, appearing in the doorway suddenly.

“Aw, choke up! choke up, Bill Bailey, and de cosy corner for yours!” the young scoundrel got back; then to me, “Say, you’re aces wit’ me, Mr. Henry, and I’ll grab dat wire foist if

ever de little goil goes out, or spoil me map, see!"

With a wild yell of delight Spuds danced off in the direction of the training quarters, and just then Tacks rushed breathlessly around the corner.

"See that kid," Tacks gasped; "I saw him yesterday down the road about two miles on the finest little horse you ever see, and the crazy man that was here the other day was with him, but I wasn't frightened!"

"Then your friend, Murf, really has a horse," Clara J. said, slowly and with signs of a gathering storm.

"He has," I answered; "but I did it for old time's sake. It cost me only a few dollars to rent the horse from a livery stable, and you can't imagine how it soothes and comforts poor old Murf!"

"Forgive me, John!" Clara J. said,

almost tearfully, and again she kissed me.

I felt that I was beginning to show the first faint symptoms of being a liar!

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN HENRY AND THE BIG RACE.

“**I**N ABOUT fo’ weeks this here Peaches filly will show us how a Kaintucky hoss can get *real* busy, suh!” Murf chuckled one morning when I dropped in to see him.

“I catch your words, Murf, but the meaning is away to the fritz,” I answered; “what’s doing?”

“I have entered this here Peaches filly for the Culmination Stakes, to be run ovah the Futurity co’sse, suh!” Murf replied.

“Are you handing me a line of bogus conversation?” I asked in surprise.

“Yo’ all left these here matters in

my hands, suh!" Murf went on, calmly, "and I certainly have to prove that yo' Uncle Owen knew something about hossflesh. I only ask you, suh, to stand by and prepare to see the dust move—that's all, suh!"

"Count me in, Murf; I'll follow the band wagon till the bass drum springs a'leak!" I chipped in.

"Only two of these have worked out to my liking, suh, and I'm for selling the othah five, if it suits yo' all."

"Do so, Murf," I said, "and use the money just as though it were handed to you by Uncle Owen. Which colt shall you keep besides Peaches?"

"The one yo' all fastened to that there fool name Shoemaker, suh," he answered so earnestly that I laughed for ten minutes.

The days rolling by found me constantly with Murf and the two colts. Wall Street knew me no more, despite the long dissertations I was handed daily by voluble Uncle Peter. Every blessed tip he had given me on the market proved to be the real goods, and simply by following his schedule I should have been many thousands to the good.

Instead, however, I was down to the little bundle of small bills otherwise known as my income, sufficient in itself to keep the wolf from eating the knob off the door, and no more.

In the morning of the day on which the "Culmination" was to be run, Clara J. said, "John, Aunt Martha and I are going to town to-day. We're going to meet Alice Gray and some of my girl friends and we'll all take

luncheon at the Waldorf. Please, do join us there, won't you?"

"Impossible, little woman," I said; "I simply must attend a very important stockholders' meeting—rolling stock, you know!"

"I'm beginning to hate that old Wall Street," she pouted; "you've been so quiet and so preoccupied of late. Really, John, you should take a day off!"

"Soon," I answered; "but not too soon," and we parted good friends.

At the track I found Murf, anxious but not excited.

"That there little Peaches filly may give some of these Eastern hoss ownahs bad dreams to-night, suh!" Murf said slowly, as he went back to the stables.

I couldn't dig up nerve enough to dope Peaches to win. Even if she

looked an oil-painted cinch I wouldn't have bet a dollar. Clara J. had my promise not to spend another case-note on a horse, and I wouldn't break my promise to the best girl of all—no, not even for her namesake.

I roamed around like an uneasy spirit. Just to show how popular I was with myself, I determined not to flash my presense near the grandstand—the far field for mine.

Just before the great event I edged up close to the fence, with every nerve in my system bobbing around and carrying weight for age.

In the person of the rail-bird next to me I discovered a friend, old Uncle Harry Carroll, late of Carroll County, Maryland; highly colored, but one of the best cooks that ever peeled a terrapin.

Old Uncle Carroll worked for a

neighbor of ours near Ruraldene, and he managed to get down to our training quarters often enough to become interested in the colts.

"I done dreamed dat Whitefoot lady cern'ly gwine'r get busy dishyer day!" he informed me.

"Oh! you mean Peaches!" I answered.

"Yath, dat Whitefoot lady," he went on, repulsing the suggestion of a more formal title. "Cern'ly do find some foolish pussons handlin' money down dishyer way. Dat Whitefoot lady gwiner go to de post at 100 to 1 to win."

"A hundred to one to win!" I gasped; for, to be frank, I didn't trust myself any too well and took no chances by mixing with the push in the betting ring.

"Yath," he grinned, "and I done



Then suddenly the shout,
"They're off!"—Page 89.

bet foah bones on dat Whitefoot lady to win—cern'ly did. If mah dream doan' tu'n out to be a liar I won't cook no mo' fo' a year!"

Peaches a rank outsider—100 to 1 to win—post odds! It was not yet too late—no; get thee behind me, Sate! Not a dollar up, and then no matter what might happen I could go home to Clara J. with a more or less quiet conscience.

They were long dropping the flag for the great race, and I began to sprout a fine crop of freckles under that broiling sky.

Then suddenly the shout, "They're off!"

Out of the chute in to the straight-away course they foamed, that heaving, seething mass of horseflesh. The sunlight seemed to rush after them, eager to dance on their glossy backs,

while all the world stood still, listening, listening to the musical thunder of the hoofbeats.

A hundred thousand eyes were fixed intently on the living river of racers—an army of eyes watching eagerly for the horse which would first give token that it was being piloted by the god Success.

But where was Peaches! There! there in the centre of the storm-tossed mass, her pretty head straight out toward the goal, her eyes darting forth the fire of a hundred famous ancestors; she seemed a sea-bird dipping to the wave and rising all foam-bedecked to meet the next.

Leaning far over her arched neck was Spuds, whispering kindly cheer into ears that hearkened well: "Go on, Peaches! keep to de hot-foot; youse has de bunch lookin' like dey's

nailed to de grass! Go on, little goil! Dey's no one here but your old college chum, Spuds! Steady, Peaches! Save your pipes for de wind up! Easy, good Peaches! They ain't a soul watchin' youse except everybody on earth! Steady, Peaches!"

On they flew, while now from fifty thousand throats hoarse cries of encouragement were flung upon the winds of evening to be carried echoing away on the clouds of dust which arose lazily from the track.

By my side old Uncle Carroll rode an imaginary horse with all the vigor of youth. The frenzy of the moment was in his blood, and his age-dimmed eyes, screwed into little points of sight, followed the every undulation of his choice!

"Oh, Lordy! brung dat Whitefoot lady home, brung her home! Oh,

Lordy! doan' yo' heerd what I said, brush her on, brush her on! Yo' brack devil hoss, keep out'n mah Whitefoot lady's way, yo' hyar me! Go on, may Whitefoot chile, go on! I'se tremblin' fo' yo' all, I'se sho'ly tremblin'! Oh, good Lordy! make dat jockey h'ist dat cat'tails 'dess once—dess tetch her one teeney tap on de ham bone! T'won't hu't yo', Whitefoot chile; no indeedy; on'y make yo' narvous! Oh, Lordy! brung dat frien' o' mine out'n dat bunch of wicked hosses! Brush her on, Lordy, brush her on! She's goin'! she's goin'! an' I'se still livin' to see it—oh, hallelloo! hallelloo!"

With the rush of an angry wind across a starless night the horses roared by the outposts where we stood, and through the clouds of dust

I could see the jockeys preparing swiftly for the fury of the finish.

The beautiful black horse was still in the lead, but there, creeping slowly up on him, inch by inch, was another—no, surely, it isn't—

At this moment the fifty thousand throats united to shriek the name of a horse that sounded like "Peaches!,"—but, no, it couldn't be possible? She hadn't a single chance, not one in a—what! is that "Peaches," there near the leader? I could feel the light of day fading, fading away while my heart seemed to stand still.

Poor Uncle Carroll, his dim old eyes strained to the point of bursting from their sockets, yet seeing only vaguely a confused and tossing sea of thoroughbreds, gave free rein to the hope he was riding to win:—

"Oh, Lordy, how come I kaint see

my Whitefoot lady! Get out'n de way yo' brack devil hoss, ain't yo' got no manners! Is you gettin' home, honey? Yes, yo' is! yes, yo' is! Go on, Whitefoot lady; it ain't fur now, an' dey's de bestest bucket of oats yo' all evah tasted waitin' fo' yo', honey! Oh, Lordy, brush her on! brush her on!"

"Peaches! Peaches!" how I yelled and cheered her. Inch by inch she crept up on the black. Now her head is at his flank; at the girth—but the wire is so near, so very near! Go on, good Peaches! Her nose is at his shoulder—can she fight him to the finish! Can she—look! look! they are neck and neck, and the multitude is mad with watching!

In that instant Spuds brought the cruel whip down wickedly, and stung with the surprise and shame of it,

Peaches leaped forward—yes, God! she wins!

There is a bedlam of huzzas in the stands, and when the sobbing Spuds was dragged from his saddle to be seated in triumph in the floral horse-shoe a shout went up such as must have startled the nervous heavens.

Peaches won.

I crawled away into a corner, weak from the excitement, and if there were tears in my eyes it's nobody's damn business.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHN HENRY AND THE STRONG FINISH.

AFTER the big race was run, I got up and ran myself. There was something in the air that frightened me, so I climbed a car and hiked it for home!

When I reached Dove's Nest Villa I found Uncle Peter on the veranda, fanning himself and telling Mother Goose rhymes to the tame mosquitoes.

"What in the world is the matter, John?" he asked in alarm; "you look positively ill; go in and pour yourself out a glass of sherry."

"Nix on the pour," I answered; "it's nothing; I've been pacemaker for a nightmare, but I'll wake up presently. Where's Clara J.?"

"She and your Aunt Martha went to town; I suppose they'll be out on the next train. Try a tumbler of whiskey, John; there's some good Bourbon in the sideboard," he advised.

"Not me," I answered; "I've had a dose of Kentucky spirits this afternoon that will last me a lifetime," and with this I left the old gentleman flat and struck for the sofa to do a lullaby.

An hour or so later I awoke from troubled dreams to hear voices outside the window.

"Why, Clara J., what on earth is the matter?" Uncle Peter was saying; "you look paler than John did when he came home. Are you ill? What's the matter, Martha? You are trembling all over. How d'you do, Miss Gray! Sit down, won't you?"

“Where is John?” I heard Clara J. ask in the most mournful of tones.

Before any one could answer, Alice Gray’s voice floated in, “Oh, I’ve been telling them all the way out here that there’s really nothing to be so dreadfully worried about. Why, I’m sure Clara J. simply couldn’t help it when she saw—”

“Hush! please do hush, Alice!” Clara J. broke in, and I began to wonder what it was all about.

Clara J. couldn’t help it when she saw—saw what? Weouw! my name must have crept into the newspapers—that must be it. Me for the Morgue! She would never forgive me for such long-continued and picturesque deception.

As I arose, quite prepared to grab my finish by the elbow, Clara J. came slowly through the door.

Seeing me, she lit her lamps with pleasure for a moment and then put them out with a burst of tears.

"Oh, John! John!" she moaned, bitterly.

It was all off. I had been caught with the goods and the delivery wagon was at the door.

"Oh, it's too terrible!" she sobbed.

I didn't know what to say. I felt as hopeless as a piece of soap in the ocean. "Don't cry," I soothed her; "come on, now, be a good fellow and brace up, Peaches!"

"Oh! don't call me that—never, never again!" she howled, and then I *knew* that my name was Pipestem.

"Tell me all about it!" I begged her; foxy boy me, eager to know just how much she had heard.

"Alice Gray and Aunt Martha and Bunch Jefferson drew my attention to

it," she said, between sobs; and I immediately picked out three people I didn't like.

"Oh, John! will you ever forgive me?" she wailed.

"Forgive you!" I repeated, and so surprised was I that a tap from a feather would have been my death blow.

"Promise to forgive me and I'll confess all," she sobbed, burying her head in a sofa pillow.

"It's a cinch!" I answered; "why, I'm the best little forgiver that ever signed a pardon. Mention the crime and I'll prove an alibi. I'll take my affidavit that you were not there at the time specified."

"But I *was* there, John!" she groaned, and the mystery grew so deep I nearly fell in it.

"I went to town"—sob—"with

Aunt Martha to do some shopping"—sob—"but we went to luncheon first"—sob—"with Bunch and Alice"—sob—"and they dared me"—sob—"I mean they coaxed me"—sob—"to go to the races with them"—sob—"and I went"—long series of sobs.

"Fidge!" I said, airily; "what's that amount to? Lots of people go to the races. I saw several there—I mean, I'm glad you did go. The excitement will do you good. It did me good; that is, it *used* to do me good!"

"But, John, I made you promise me never, never to bet again on a horse race," she continued, solemnly.

"And I've kept my promise faithfully," I answered, whereupon she started crying as though her heart would break.

Finally she controlled herself and

said, "Bunch showed me a program, and when I saw a horse named Peaches in a race I became so excited I didn't know what to do. Nobody ever called me that but you, John, and—and, well, I just couldn't help it!"

"Couldn't help what?" I laughed; "did you take a flying leap out of the stand?"

"No, but Bunch told me it would be simply criminal if I didn't bet on my namesake, so when Aunt Martha wasn't looking I pulled a bill hastily from my purse and told him to bet it on Peaches to win."

Say! I had a grin on my face the size of a barn door.

"After Bunch had gone I looked in my purse and found I had given him the wrong bill. I meant to give him \$10, but by mistake I gave him the

hundred dollars you gave me to buy that summer suit."

"And Bunch played a hundred dollars for you on Peaches?" I gasped.

"Ah-huh!" she nodded.

"At 100 to 1," I shrieked.

"I don't know what it was at," she answered through her tears; "for after I realized what I had done I nearly fainted. I was so frightened I couldn't even watch the race. When it was over, Bunch screamed like an Indian and rushed away. Presently he came back and threw a bundle of bills in my lap and I stuffed them in Aunt Martha's purse and—and—cried so they had to take me home. Can you ever forgive me, John?"

"Forgive you! Why, say! you are the most thoroughly forgiven girl that ever brought home money to a lazy husband. A hundred dollars on

Peaches at a 100 to 1—well, say! Where's Aunt Martha? That's too much money for a reckless old lady to lug around—lock all the gates!"

Then and there I 'fessed up everything from Alpha to Omaha, and I wish you could have seen the expression on Clara J.'s face when I came to the finish and told her that "Peaches" was *our* horse!

She forgave me and I forgave her, and then we both forgave each other, and wound up by dancing around the room and kicking the meaning out of all the furniture.

When presently we strolled out on the lawn we found Bunch there, and Alice broke away long enough to say, "Didn't I tell you he'd forgive you!"

"Why, Alice," I answered, "for ten thousand dollars I'd open a fac-



"Look out! I took the hinges
off that gate to-day."—Page 105.

tory and turn out forgiveness by the barrel."

Presently it was noised around the household that I owned the colt which had won a swell race and the change of sentiment in favor of horses was so sudden that the grass got frightened and stopped growing.

Uncle Peter offered to back me for any amount of money and said that he was delighted to know we had a horse in the family that was such a credit to us.

After dinner Clara J. and I strolled down to the gate to talk matters over, and presently Tacks yelled at us, "Say, don't lean too heavy on that gate, 'cause I took the hinges off to-day so's I could get through quicker if that crazy man came along!"

At that very moment who should

come plodding up to the gate but Murf and the hero of the day, Spuds!

Clara J.'s welcome included a kiss for them both, to their intense embarrassment. For the next half hour Uncle Peter was so busy apologizing to Murf and Spuds that nobody had a chance to congratulate them.

Then we had a glorification for sure, and Murf succeeded in getting his ancient enemy so full of Bourbon that finally loving hands had to lead Uncle Peter out to the pump and hand him the deluge in order to keep him from telling all the family secrets.

"Peaches" was the toast of the evening, and if the game little colt had been there, a seat on top of the piano for hers, with a bottle of Ruinart in each hoof.

When, finally, Murf was ready to take the count he turned to me and

said, "Yo' Uncle Owen's judgment sho'ly made good, suh; and it is proved that Hank Peters ain't no liah, suh, for right now yo' all are big Casino on the Eastern tracks, suh; good night!"

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